

Thompson Maurice

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Lincoln Poetry

Poets

Maurice Thompson

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
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Thompson, Maurice

Lincoln

"He was the North, the South,
the East, the West -"

The Youth's Companion

February 11, 1904.



He was the North, the South, the East, the West,
The thrall, the master, all of us in one;
There was no section that he held the best;
His love shone as impartial as the sun;
And so revenge appealed to him in vain,
He smiled at it, as at a thing forlorn,
And gently put it from him, rose and stood
A moment's space in pain,
Remembering the prairies and the corn
And the glad voices of the field and wood.

Maurice Thompson.

Thompson, Maurice

LINCOLN'S GRAVE

"May one who fought
in honor for the South"

Lincoln's Grave

By Maurice Thompson

MAY one who fought in honor for the
South
Uncovered stand and sing by Lincoln's
grave?
Why, if I shrank not at the cannon's
mouth,
Nor swerved one inch for any battle
wave,
Should I now tremble in this quiet close,
Hearing the prairie wind go lightly by
From billowy plains of grass and miles
of corn,
While out of deep repose,
The great sweet spirit lifts itself on
high
And broods above our land this summer
morn?

I, mindful of a dark and bitter past,
And of its clashing hopes and raging
hates,
Still, standing here, invoke a love so
vast
It cancels all and all obliterates,
Save love itself, which cannot harbor
wrong;
Oh, for a voice of boundless melody,
A voice to fill heaven's hollow to the
brim
With one brave burst of song,
Stronger than tempest, nobler than the
sea,
That I might lend it to a song of him!

Meseems I feel his presence. Is he dead?
Death is a word. He lives and grander
grows,
At Gettysburg he bows his bleeding
head;
He spreads his arms where Chickamauga
flows,
As if to clasp old soldiers to his breast,
Of South or North, no matter which
they be,
Not thinking of what uniform they
wore—
His heart the palimpsest
Record on record of humanity,
Where love is first and last forevermore.

His humor, born of virile opulence,
Stung like a pungent sap or wild-fruit
zest,
And satisfied a universal sense
Of manliness, the strongest and the
best;
A soft Kentucky strain was in his voice,
And the Ohio's deeper boom was there,
With some wild accents of old Wabash
days,
And winds of Illinois;
And when he spoke he took us unaware,
With his high courage and unselfish
ways.

He was the North, the South, the East,
the West;
The thrall, the master, all of us in one;
There was no section that he held the
best;
His love shown as impartial as the sun;
And so revenge appealed to him in vain,
He smiled at it as at a thing forlorn,
And gently put it from him, rose and
stood
A moment's space in pain,
Remembering the prairies and the corn
And the glad voices of the field and
wood.

Annealed in white-hot fire, he bore the
test
Of every strain temptation could in-
vent—
Hard points of slander, shivered on his
breast,
Fell at his feet, and envy's blades were
best
In his bare hands and lightly cast aside;
He would not wear a shield; no selfish
aim
Guided on thought of all those trying
hours;
No breath of pride,
No pompous striving for the pose of
fame
Weakened one stroke of all his noble
powers.

Lincoln

HIS was the tireless strength of native
truth,
The might of rugged, untaught earnest-
ness.
Deep-freezing poverty made brave his
youth,
And toned his manhood with its winter
stress.

—Maurice Thompson.

Lincoln
1/2/20

A PROPHECY

(From "Lincoln's Grave.")

Old soldiers true, ah, them all men can trust,
Who fought, with conscience clear, on either
side;

Who bearded death and thought their cause
was just;

Their stainless honor can not be denied;
Ring it and sing it up and down the land,
And let no voice dare answer it with sneers,
Or shut its meaning out;
Ring it and sing it, we go hand in hand,
Old infantry, old cavalry, old cannoneers.

And if Virginia's vales shall ring again
To battle-yell of Moseby or Mahone,
If Wilder's wild brigade or Morgan's men
Once more wheel into lines; or all alone:
A Sheridan shall ride, a Cleburne fell—
There will not be two flags above them flying,
But both in one, welded in that pure flame
Unflaring in us all,
When kindred unto kindred, loudly crying,
Rally and cheer in freedoms' holy name!

—Maurice Thompson.

"A Kentucky Strain in His Voice"

WALLACE STEWART, N. Y.:
The passage that C. E. K. in-
quired about in your issue of July
18 occurs in the twenty-second
stanza of "Lincoln's Grave," by
Maurice Thompson (1844-1901), as
follows:

His humor, born of virile opu-
lence,
Stung like a pungent sap or wild-
fruit zest,
And satisfied a universal sense
Of manliness, the strangest and
the best.
A soft Kentucky strain was in
his voice,
And the Ohio's deeper boom was
there,
With some wild accents of old
Wabash days,
And winds of Illinois;
And when he spoke he took us
unaware
With his high courage and un-
selfish ways.

Mrs. Henry D. Holmes, Montpe-
lier, Vt., sent eleven stanzas of
the poem. Miss Louella D. Ever-
ett, Boston, Mass., wrote that it
"was read before the Phi Beta
Kappa Society at Harvard Uni-
versity and was published by
Stone & Kimball, Chicago. The
ode begins: 'May one who fought
in honor for the South uncovered
stand and sing by Lincoln's
grave.'"

No complete copy was received.
The poem is abridged in Sted-
man's "American Anthology,"
Burton Stevenson's "Great Amer-
ican as Seen by the Poets," "The
Praise of Lincoln," and other
volumes.

New York Times 8-29-43

WATERBURY REPUBLICAN, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1949—PAGE 3

The Scrap Book

YOU are underrating the President (Lincoln). I grant that he lacks higher education and his manners are not in accord with European conceptions of the dignity of a chief magistrate. He is a well-developed child of nature and is not skilled in polite phrases and poses. But he is a man of profound feeling, correct and firm principles and incorruptible honesty. His motives are unquestionable, and he possesses to a remarkable degree the characteristic, God-given trait of the people, sound common sense.—Carl Schurz.

* * *

Lincoln, six feet one in his stocking feet,
The lank man, knotty and tough as a hickory rail,
Whose hands were always too big for white-kid gloves,

Whose wit was a coonskin sack of dry, tall tales,
Whose weathered face was homely as a plowed field.

—Stephen Vincent Benet

* * *

Abraham Lincoln . . . who was at home and welcome with the humblest, and with a spirit and a practical vein in the times of terror that commanded the admiration of the wisest. His heart was great as the world, but there was no room in it to hold the memory of wrong.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

* * *

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads and the assassin . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs. —Carl Sandburg.

A soft Kentucky strain was in his voice,
And the Ohio's deeper boom was there,
With some wild accents of old Wabash days,
And winds of Illinois;
And when he spoke he took us unaware,
With his high courage and unselfish ways.

—Maurice Thompson

* * *

One night he dreamed that he was in a crowd, when some one recognized him as the President, and exclaimed in surprise, "He is a very common-looking man." Whereupon he answered, "Friend, the Lord prefers common-looking people. That is the reason he makes so many of them."

—James Morgan.

* * *

O Captain, my Captain, rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,

For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—and for you the shores a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning.

—Walt Whitman

* * *

In the character of the victim (Lincoln), and even in the accessories of his last moments, there is something so homely and innocent that it takes the question, as it were, out of all the pomp of history and the ceremonial of diplomacy—it touches the heart of nations and appeals to the domestic sentiment of mankind.

—Benjamin Disraeli

FROM

LINCOLN'S GRAVE

*Read by Maurice Thompson, once a Confederate
soldier, at a Harvard Phi Beta Kappa reunion*

HE was the Southern mother leaning forth,
At dead of night to hear the cannon roar,
Beseeching God to turn the cruel North
And break it that her son might come once more;
He was New England's maiden, pale and pure,
Whose gallant lover fell on Shiloh's plain;
He was the mangled body of the dead;

He writhing did endure
Wounds and disfigurement and racking pain,
Gangrene and amputation, all things dread.

He was the North, the South, the East, the West,
The thrall, the master, all of us in one;
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